

“How Can I Make Travel Safer and More Enjoyable?”

Most travelers experience nothing more serious than sunburn or a missed exit from the interstate. Here are some common sense safety tips to help you avoid more serious problems when you travel.

Prepare your home

Use this checklist to prepare for your trip, and to make certain you don't forget anything important before you leave home.

§ Stop mail and newspaper deliveries or have a neighbor collect them daily.

§ Leave shades and blinds in normal positions.

§ Put at least two lights and a radio on automatic timers.

§ Ask a neighbor to keep your property maintained (grass mowed, snow shoveled).

§ Have someone leave trash at your curb on garbage collection day and park a car in your driveway occasionally.

§ Leave a key with a trusted neighbor in case of an emergency.

§ Ask your police or sheriff's department if it has a “Vacation Check” program. You would probably indicate your dates of departure and

return, as well as which rooms have timed lights, and which neighbor has a key.

§ Lock all windows and doors before you go. Don't forget to double-check basement and garage doors.

Prepare yourself

When you pack:

§ Make a record of your passport, credit card and traveler's check numbers, as well as plane, train or bus ticket numbers. An easy way to do this is to photocopy them all together. Give a copy of the list to a family member, or friend, for safekeeping.

§ Make sure you have enough prescription medication to last your entire trip—take a backup prescription.

§ Clean out your wallet and/or purse. Don't take anything (like credit cards or important papers) that you won't need.

§ Place a piece of paper with your name and itinerary inside each bag. This will make identification easier if your baggage ID tag is lost.

On the road

§ Don't carry large amounts of cash. Use traveler's checks or credit cards whenever possible.

§ Keep careful tabs on your plane, train or bus tickets—they're as valuable as cash.

§ If you're driving, plan your route carefully. Travel on main roads and use maps. Have your car serviced before you leave.

§ When stopping en route, conceal valuables from sight, preferably in the trunk. If you stop overnight, remove luggage and other valuables from the car.

§ If your car breaks down, turn on the flashers and open the hood or tie a white cloth to the antenna. If anyone stops to offer help, stay in your locked car, and through a slightly opened window, ask the person to call the police.

§ If possible, carry a cellular phone.

In your hotel or motel

§ Don't leave luggage unattended. Check your baggage with the staff if you can't go to your room immediately.

§ If a front desk clerk mentions your room number loudly, request a new room.

§ Don't enter the room if the door is ajar.

§ A woman traveling alone should consider asking for an escort to her room or vehicle.

§ Check behind curtains, under the bed, and in the bathroom, shower and closets to make sure no one is hiding in the room.

§ Locate fire exits, elevators and public phones. Know the best way to get out of the building in an emergency.

§ Use all auxiliary locking devices.

§ Do not leave valuables in your hotel room. Place them in the hotel safe-deposit box. Always keep cash, credit cards and keys with you.

§ Do not answer the door in a hotel or motel room without knowing who is there. If a person claims to be an employee, call the front desk and verify who he or she is and why the visit is necessary.

§ Check your belongings daily. Arrange your possessions so you will know immediately if something is missing.

§ Be observant. Report any suspicious activity to the management.

§ Never sit in the room with the door propped open. Don't leave the door open for any length of time, even if you are just going to the ice machine.

§ If someone is loitering in the hall near your room, do not enter your room. Go directly to the front desk and report it.

§ Look around before entering parking lots or garages. Park near lighted walkways when possible.

In the area

§ Carry your purse close to your body—don't let it dangle. Carry your wallet in an inside coat or front trouser pocket.

§ Learn about and be aware of your surroundings. Ask the hotel/motel desk clerk, concierge or bell staff about problem areas to avoid.

§ Select sight-seeing companies, guides and drivers carefully. Inquire at your hotel's front desk for reputable services.

§ Make sure everyone in your party knows the name, address and telephone number of your hotel or motel.

§ Avoid advertising that you are a tourist by the way you dress.

§ Carry only cash that you need, and bills in small denominations. Don't flash your cash or jewelry.

§ If members of the group separate, be sure they check-in at prearranged times and locations.

Keeping fit on the road

There is no reason to cancel your daily fitness routine just because you're traveling—as long as you take some common sense precautions.

§ When jogging or walking, team up with a partner—a friend, colleague or family member—especially if you go out in the early morning or in the evening.

§ Check to see if your hotel/motel has a health club, or if it has access to one you can use.

§ Avoid isolated roads, trails and paths. Stick to well-lighted, well-populated routes.

§ Wear clothing that makes you visible to motorists—bright colors for day; white or reflective clothing for evening.

§ Always carry identification.

§ Carry change for an emergency phone call.

§ Consider carrying a whistle or shriek alarm.

§ Always wear your glasses or contacts.

§ Stay alert, especially if you're in a strange area. Don't walk or jog wearing headphones.